



Guidance for NIH students and NIH mentors in the joint PhD program with the Karolinska Institutet (KI)

This joint program began in 2002 and fosters collaboration between the KI and the NIH via the training of graduate students. The student has two mentors (one from the KI and one from the NIH) and performs research that is collaborative between these two mentors. The purposes of this note are to provide guidance and to specify some of the most important requirements for NIH mentors and for students who wish to enter this program through the NIH. This note does not replace the general rules for doctoral education at the KI that apply to all students and their mentors. In fact, the general rules are often a valuable primary resource for questions about the general philosophy and specific requirements of doctoral education at the KI. See: [Rules for Doctoral Education](#)

Three Major Milestones. The PhD studentship has three major milestones, which are briefly reviewed below.

1. ***Individual Study Plan and Admissions Seminar.*** Within three months of starting at the NIH, the student, with active help from the two co-mentors, must prepare an individual study plan that describes both research objectives and learning outcomes. After the individual study plan is completed, the student presents the proposal to KI Departmental faculty for review and approval. The admission seminar must occur within six months of the student starting at the NIH and must be attended in person at the KI. Although the NIH mentor is encouraged to attend in person, s/he may participate via telephone or “webinar” (seminar on the web).
2. ***Half-time Review.*** After two to three years, the student must summarize progress on research and educational training and also present a feasible plan to complete all research and education in the remaining period of the studentship.
3. ***Thesis Defense.*** The last milestone is writing the PhD thesis and successfully defending it at the KI.

Note: The NIH mentor must attend in person both the half-time review and the thesis defense.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

1. ***Fostering collaborative PhD training.*** The goals of this joint PhD program are to foster collaboration between the NIH and the KI, and to provide the student with the opportunities associated with joint mentorship from two outstanding institutions. As an example of this collaborative training, both mentors are expected to be adequately involved to merit co-authorship on all of the student’s papers. To achieve these goals, the mentors must have an active research collaboration, which requires frequent communication among the three parties (student and two mentors). To facilitate collaboration, we require that the student spend at least one to two weeks at the KI each year. In addition to meeting the co-mentor and laboratory staff, the student may also take KI courses, which often last one to two weeks.

2. **Course requirements.** All students must complete 30 university credits¹ of research education, and 7.5 of these credits (“core” courses) must be completed prior to the half-time assessment/review. Both “core” (7.5 credits) and “advanced” (22.5 credits) courses may be obtained at the KI, the NIH, or affiliated universities. However, for any course outside the KI, the student must seek prior approval from the home department at the KI.
3. **Orientation course for students.** KI requires all students to take a two-day orientation (with no associated course credits) that provides useful information about doctoral education at the KI. Students are encouraged to take this orientation during their visit for the Admissions Seminar but absolutely before the half-time review.
4. **Annual progress report.** All students must complete an annual progress report on-line at the KI website. In addition to this on-line report, the student must meet with each mentor once per year to evaluate personal development and to discuss potential problems. This meeting should be open-ended, allow full vetting of any issues from the perspectives of both the student and the mentor, and be documented for subsequent review by the student and mentors.
5. **Length of studentship.** Although KI students are expected to complete training in four years, we allow five years for NIH students. The extra year allows time to adjust to a new laboratory and to a new living environment.
6. **Minimum training at each institution.** As a general plan, we recommend that students spend the first three years at the NIH and the last two years at the KI. However, at a minimum, the student must spend 12 months at the KI. Although this time may be composed of multiple short blocks (one to two weeks), we recommend that longer blocks (12 – 36 months) be considered. These longer blocks allow more substantive work to be completed and easier access to housing.
7. **Joint scientific symposium.** We have a joint scientific symposium every 1.5 years, alternating at the NIH and the KI. Both students and faculty present lectures, and students also present posters. The student must attend all joint symposia held during their studentship, and the NIH mentor must attend at least those held at NIH.
8. **Required financial support.** The NIH mentor is responsible for paying up to five years of the student’s stipend, health insurance, and up to \$3,000 per annum for travel/educational costs.

With their signatures below, the NIH student and mentor agree to the principles and requirements specified above.

Student Name

Signature

Date

Mentor Name

Signature

Date

Program Co-Director

Signature

Date

¹ One week of full-time studies correspond to 1.5 university credits.